

The Ballarat Naturalist

Volume 21 No.10

November 2021



Members' show and tell from
October's meeting.

Above: Powerful Owl family
at Clarksdale (Emily Noble);
Right: Striated Pardalote up
close;
Below: Striated Pardalotes
engaged in displaying
(both by Carol Hall)



More Show and Tell images from October's Meeting

Golden Moth
orchids
Diuris sp.
at Sparrow
Ground

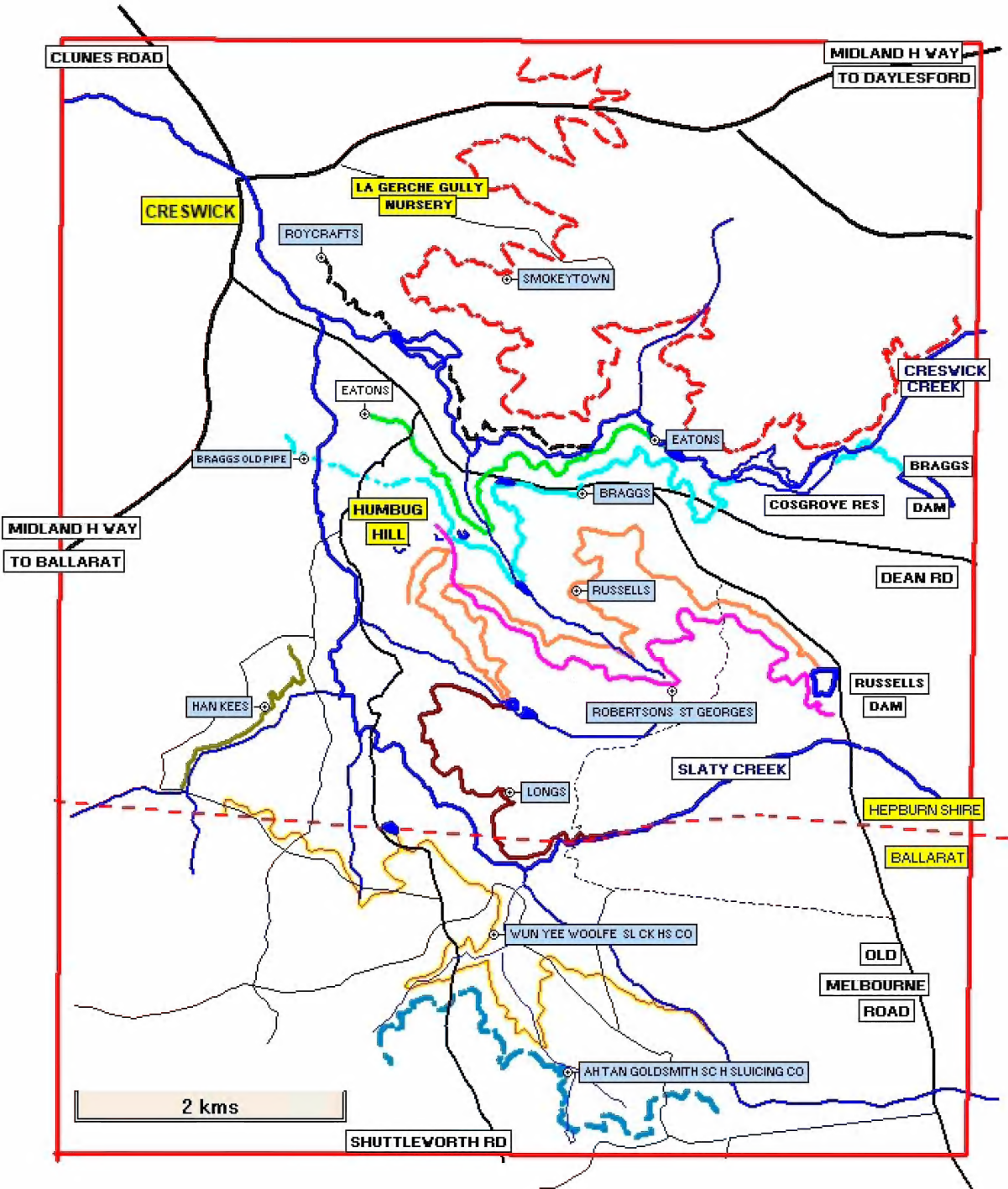


Natural wildflower garden—Sparrow Ground

Val Hocking

John Petheram’s Show and Tell of the extensive historic water races throughout Creswick Forest. These structures are of state and even national significance and form part of the rich mining and engineering heritage of the area.

Research into the water races, Chinese gardens and other cultural sites in Creswick district forms part of the ongoing efforts by club members to protect and preserve these unique features. Numerous threats including new developments, road maintenance, drainage, encroaching housing, firewood removal, camping, recreation and prospecting all have impacts on the extant heritage sites. Well worth the effort!



Excerpts from Club Meeting held Fri October 1, 2021

Opening and Apologies

Attendance: President Bill Elder welcomed 22 members and one visitor to the meeting.

Apologies: A. Grant, S. Faull and M. Moravec

Motion: that the Apologies be accepted.

Moved: R. Scott

Seconded: F. Hanrahan

Carried.

Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Motion: that the Minutes of the previous Meeting (September 3, 2021) be accepted as a true and accurate record.

Moved: C. Hall

Seconded: G. Lunt

Carried.

Show and Tell and field reports

Carol showed us several delightful photos of Striated Pardalotes investigating holes in a sandy bank at Long Point Flora Reserve where they have been known to nest in the past. Whilst none of the birds were observed with any nesting material, two of them were “displaying” to each other. The wildflowers were also looking lovely at the reserve, with the sundews and wattles particular highlights.

Val reported that she had encountered two Rakali in Fairyland at Lake Wendouree, a single Cape Barren Goose on the lawn near Forest St, three families of Black Swans with cygnets and a mudlark sitting on a nest on a branch hanging out over the Lake. She also showed us very colourful photos of clumps of Golden Moth Orchids and Pink Bells, Golden Bush-pea and Slender Rice-flower flowering profusely at Sparrow Ground, one of the locations to be visited during this Sunday’s field trip.

John P mentioned that the rare Small-flower Grevillea *Grevillea micrantha* was budding in Creswick earlier this week and showed us an impressive map of 10 historic water races in Creswick RP covering about 200km for which the status of “State Significance” is being sought through Heritage Victoria. He also showed a photo of a Double Daffodil, a plant found in one of the Creswick Water Races that probably descends from those plants known to have been cultivated by Chinese settlers and sold across the goldfields during the Gold Rush. Another photo showed members of the Ballarat Bushwalking and Outdoor Club on one of the monthly historic walks that John has been leading in the Creswick area. (More on p. 5)

Emily presented a photo of a flowering Enfield Grevillea, *G. bedgoodiana* to show that they have just started flowering in Enfield State Forest and Park. She also showed a photo of the Powerful Owl family at Clarksdale. The healthy, well-fed chick first spotted last week, and a parent was holding the remains of a Long-billed Corella, whilst what was presumably the corella’s mate sat on a dead branch above them looking forlorn.

October Meeting minutes continued:

Emily also showed a photo of a male Striated Pardalote emerging from its nest hollow nearby in a Candlebark, and a Tawny Frogmouth found this week at her Scarsdale property, roosting beside a large wetland.

Bill E showed us several lovely photos of the resident Eastern Grey Kangaroos sunning themselves on his back lawn this week, one of whom had a joey.

Syllabus Item: Yasmin Kelsall from *Confluence Ecology and Community* presented an incredibly succinct yet detailed overview of “Habitat Hectares - a method of vegetation assessment”. Bill Elder thanked her on behalf of members, and several members followed-up with questions. A *Wattles of Ballarat* book is also heading her way.

Business Arising from Previous Club Meeting September 3, 2021

Still awaiting a date for interested members to meet online with Irene Cassetari from DELWP to learn more about DELWP’s proposed research into the effect of varying fire regimes on *Grevillea bedgoodiana*.

The Completion Report of FNCB’s Communities Environment Program grant has now been officially accepted.

Correspondence Report

Motion: That the Inwards Correspondence be accepted and the Outwards Correspondence be approved.

Moved: K. Elder Seconded: J. Gregurke **Carried.**

Business Arising from Correspondence:

- Invitation for a Club representative to attend the Environment Victoria AGM online on Thursday 28th October at 5.30pm. If you would like to attend as the Club rep., please contact Bill E.
- We have been invited to book a 30-minute, one-on-one meeting online with a technical specialist conducting investigations into the Western Victoria Transmission Network Project (WVTNP). The meeting could be with a specialist on biodiversity, bushfire or landscape and visual amenity. Several members have already indicated their interest. Would anyone else like to attend? If yes, please let Emily know ASAP.
- Discuss the Peninsula FNC offer that we re-schedule our SEANA Spring Camp by taking their 2022 host position: held over for discussion during General Business.

(Minutes continue on p.12)

Habitat Hectare

A method of vegetation assessment and aid to land management.

October's Club meeting welcomed Yasmin Kelsell from *Confluence Ecology and Community* to talk about the Habitat Hectare method of Vegetation Quality Assessment (VQA).

The system has been around since 2003 and is designed for assessment of vegetation, in particular native vegetation. Yasmin explained the reasons for conducting assessments including the future management of public and private land. The method is applicable to forest, grasslands, wetlands and waterways.

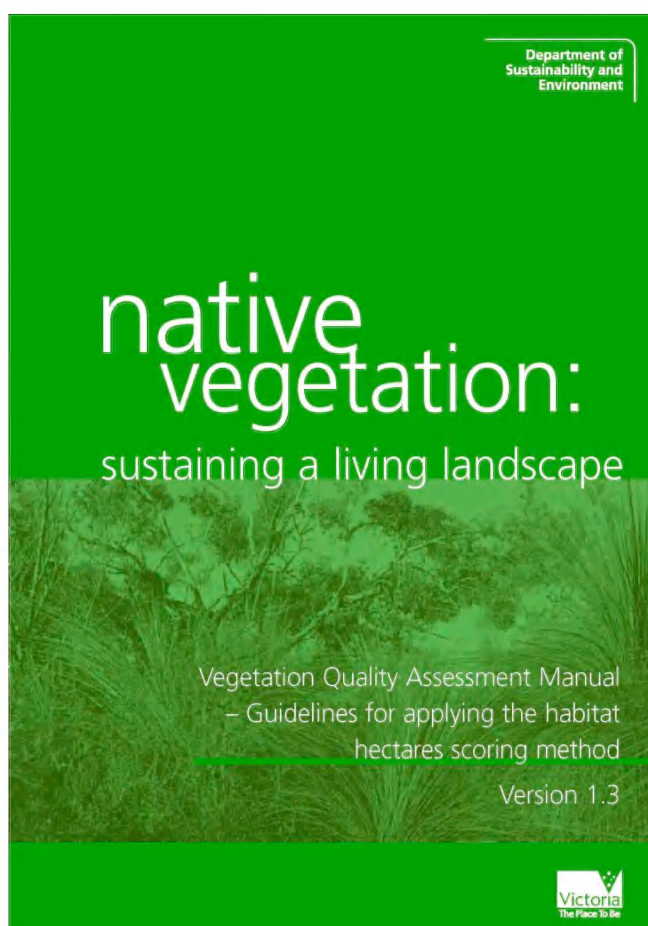
Habitat Hectare relies heavily on the Native Vegetation Quality Assessment Manual which guides assessors through the process.

It assumes a certain degree of knowledge by assessors including botanical knowledge and ecological knowledge such as (Ecological Vegetation Classes (EVCs) and the ability to consistently estimate cover values for canopy, etc.

Yasmin also mentioned the importance of using resources such as DELWP's NatureKit which is a useful mapping tool, plus Local EVC reports which details the average characteristics for each EVC.

Another online resource is the VicVeg Online which provides plenty of comprehensive EVC information. Also check out the VVB for more excellent information.

Yasmin went into a lot of detail about the characteristics measured or considered in an EVC from the widest viewpoint, the Bioregion down to the site and divisions within the site being assessed (Habitat Zones). A site can be any area of interest and a Habitat Zone is a defined area of native vegetation within a single EVC with an assumed similar quality.



Habitat Hectare Assessment Process

Step 1: Determine if an assessment is appropriate

Step 2: Pre-visit Preparation

Step 3: Reconnaissance

Step 4: Bioregion and EVC Identification

Step 5: Habitat Zone Identification

Step 6: Vegetation Quality Assessment

There are many attributes measured in the VQA:

Tree canopy cover, understorey diversity, logs and organic litter, size and connectivity of patches, large old trees (the number of them per ha, their health, size in height and girth, %age of canopy cover), plus recruitment of young trees and shrubs. Other considerations of the method include lack of weeds and a measurement of %age cover and threat status; the presence, adequacy and species diversity of recruitment; %age cover of organic/leaf litter as well as the landscape context, i.e. where the site is located in relation to the rest of the environment.

► Patch size

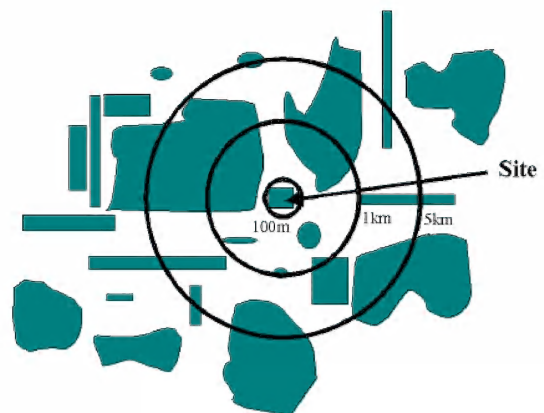
- area of contiguous native vegetation

► Neighbourhood

- amount and distribution of native vegetation around the habitat zone

► Distance to core area

- distance from the habitat zone to an area of native vegetation $\geq 50\text{ha}$



So, finally after looking at each aspect of the assessment, a score for each attribute is arrived at (printed score sheets are available <https://www.environment.vic.gov.au/native-vegetation/native-vegetation/biodiversity-information-and-site-assessment>). The Manual contains guidance as to the what the scores can tell you about the quality of vegetation in the study site. Obviously, a higher score means a better quality area - in terms of biodiversity and habitat value for plants and animals.

1. Site Condition	Score out of 100
▶ Large trees	10
▶ Tree canopy cover	5
▶ Understorey	25
▶ Lack of weeds	15
▶ Recruitment	10
▶ Organic litter	5
▶ Logs	5
Site Condition - 75	
2. Landscape Context	
▶ Patch Size	10
▶ Neighbourhood	10
▶ Distance to Core Area	5
Landscape Context - 25	

The Habitat Hectare method as explained so eloquently by Yasmin seems to be the perfect way of assessing areas of particular interest to field nats and may even be adopted by us as we seek to help land managers and agencies make sound land management decisions based on standardised, on-ground, considered assessments. Thanks to Yasmin and we may see her again for some further assistance in using this method in the future.



End Of Year Events

Friday December 3rd's Club Meeting will be a special end of year event all about us. It will be a Special Members' Images Night where members are invited to attend the Gillies St. venue for the first time this year and present their field naturalist experiences during 2021. Bring pics or powerpoint files on a USB.

Sign in/QR and masks indoors will probably still be necessary, so be prepared. Similarly, supper may or may not be on. Stay tuned.

We will also canvas your ideas for excursions/walks and other events for 2022.

In addition, we need to discuss the makeup of the committee and encourage more members to get involved.

Density limits may still apply—stay tuned for updates.

December's Excursion and Break-up will be held on Sunday Dec 5th to Flagstaff Hill, south of Linton. Emily has found some exciting new places to explore there. Meet at Gillies St. at 1.30pm to convoy to the site or meet at Linton at 2.00pm (meeting point to be advised).

After exploring Flagstaff Hill for a couple of hours, we will travel to Clarkesdale Bird Sanctuary for a BBQ tea. Meat and GF/Veg alternatives will be supplied plus soft drinks, bread and sauce. Please feel free to bring your own salad or anything else you'd like to have. Tea and Coffee facilities are available at Clarkesdale - BYO Mug or cup or thermos or eski or...

This is our final chance to get together for 2021 which has been a wholly forgettable year as far as getting together is concerned.

Please RSVP to Bill Elder (see back page) by Thursday Dec 2nd to help us cater for everyone who wants to attend. The Club values your interest and we want you to enjoy at least one event before the year is over!



Toilets—who needs them?

Well, everyone! For something so basic to all of us, the toilet remains one of the vital components of any Field Naturalist excursion. While considering the logistics of our recent SEANA Weekend, we had suitable toilet and lunch facilities at the top of a list of “must haves”.



Woomelang Public Disability Toilets

Of course, if you're out and about in unfamiliar places, sometimes it's not easy finding a loo when you need one. This is where the National Public Toilet Map comes in. It is available online at website www.toiletmap.gov.au or via smart phone app on iPhone or Android. And, furthermore, the Continence Foundation of Australia is asking for help to hunt down Australia's regional public toilets.

The Foundation believes there could be thousands of regional toilets around the country that are not yet on the map. So, as you're traveling around, keep in touch with the map and if you find a place that isn't there, you can register the toilet and get it on the map.

The National Public Toilet Map lists over 19,000 toilets giving people the confidence to go about their life feeling supported.

People living with a variety of health conditions, expectant or new mothers and the elderly can all be living with incontinence, but the toilet map is also an asset to families with young children, grey nomads and day trippers alike.

Our intrepid dunny hunter, Bernadette provided these snaps of public loos in the Mallee.



*Disability Toilet
Inland Botanical Gardens, Mildura*

THE NATIONAL

PUBLIC TOILET MAP

PART OF THE NATIONAL CONTINENCE PROGRAM

Find

My facilities

Preferences

Add a toilet

Login

Facilities found

Toilets are displayed according to your preferences with the best match at the top of the list.

Showing facilities that are open now. [Show all facilities.](#)

Smythesdale Gardens

Gardens Road, Smythesdale

OPEN: 24 hours

[More information](#)

Smythesdale Town Square

Glenelg Highway, Smythesdale

OPEN: 24 hours

[More information](#)

Caltex Smythesdale

1520 Glenelg Highway, Smythesdale

OPEN: Sat-Sun 6:30am-8:45pm, Mon-Fri 5:30am-8:45pm

[More information](#)

It seems, no matter where you are in Australia, you won’t get caught short if you have the National Public Toilet Map handy. You can be in downtown Smythesdale or in the Red Centre and be assured of a comfort stop nearby.

The only thing that might let you down is the time of day (many facilities close overnight), or the internet connection!

THE NATIONAL

PUBLIC TOILET MAP

PART OF THE NATIONAL CONTINENCE PROGRAM

Find

My facilities

Preferences

Add a toilet

Login

Facilities found

Toilets are displayed according to your preferences with the best match at the top of the list.

Showing facilities that are open now. [Show all facilities.](#)

Ranger Station

Lasseter Highway, Mutitjulu

OPEN: 6am-8:30pm

[More information](#)

Cultural Centre

Lasseter Highway, Mutitjulu

OPEN: 6am-8:30pm

[More information](#)

Base Climb

Off Abrahams Cres, Mutitjulu

OPEN: 6am-8:30pm

[More information](#)

Minutes continued from p.5

Reports:

Treasurer's Report

Opening bal: \$11,911.65

Income: \$ 405.67

Expenses: \$ 2,067.50

Closing bal: \$10,249.82

Motion: that the Treasurer's Report be accepted and the invoice for newsletter printing be approved for payment.

Moved: K. Elder

Seconded: J. Petheram

Carried.

General Business

SEANA Spring Camp (Oct. 22-24) cancelled due to the uncertainty around COVID restrictions and the complications of vaccination status, number limits on outdoor gatherings, and the ongoing risk of infections and lockdowns throughout the country.

Additionally, the committee felt that the COVID rules that we would need to apply would destroy the social interaction that make SEANA events so enjoyable. Registrants have been notified via email. The Peninsula FNC have kindly offered that we re-schedule our SEANA Spring Camp by taking their 2022 host position. To summarise the initial thoughts of members, there is support for taking up this opportunity given all of the preparatory work already done and the fact that the next possible opening is 2024. The committee will discuss it at more length at our next Committee Meeting.

Stella Bedggood Memorial Lecture likely to be held via Zoom this year, so we won't need to arrive early to spruce up our meeting room with flowers/ bring supper to share. Emily will send an invitation to the Bedggood family and special guests as per usual, inviting them to join us online.

(For more details see page 16)

A Wolf Spider (Lycosidae) in his/her hole in our vegetable garden.

Bill Elder



Woowookarung and Sparrow Ground Excursion October 3rd

On our first Ballarat Excursion for some time, a small group headed out to Woowookarung Regional Park in Ballarat to view two of our 17 'vegetation monitoring' sites, led by John Petheram.

The first (Site 3) is in natural woodland with a backdrop of Austral Grass Trees. This is very free of weeds, under a canopy of Stringybark and Broadleaf Peppermints. The ground flora has 26 species, dominated by Tussock Grass (*Poa sieberiana*), Golden Bush-pea (*Pultenaea gunnii*) and Flax Lily (*Dianella admixta*). The next area (Site 1) south of Clayton St was cleared of Blue Gums in 2011 and is now a mixture of 3m high *Eucalyptus obliqua*, with Gorse and English Broom - denser near the road. Further in, the trees are growing well and will soon obscure the photo-monitoring changes.

Next, we visited weed control by Parks Victoria near the intersection of Boundary Rd and Foos Lane. We viewed a hand-sprayed area under regenerating trees and then a large area cleared by 'Eco-blade' very effectively. This has opened the vegetation to produce a lightly treed paddock with good views towards the city from the highest part of the Park.



Woowookarung monitoring site 3 with site 1 area in the distance (regrowth)

(Note: live, masked people maintaining 1.5m distances, but in the same physical place!!)

After a mid-morning break at Eureka Stockade, Val Hocking led us around Sparrow Ground Reserve. On both the north and south sides of the oval Golden Moths *Diuris* sp. were in



abundance (see P. 2). Lots of budding Sun Orchids stems were evident too - known from last year to be both Salmon *Thelymitra rubra* and Blue-spotted Sun Orchids *Thelymitra ixioides*. Patches of Pink Bells *Tetradlea ciliata* were seen in several places. A few clumps of Guinea Flower *Hibbertia australis*, Trailing Goodenia and occasional Fringe Lily were added to our list.

We passed through a “wildflower garden”, filled with Slender Rice flowers *Pimelea linifolia*, more Golden Bush Pea *Pultenaea gunnii*, Beard Heath, Austral Grass trees and various wattle species.

We then crossed over Richard St into the Sandy Banks (DELWP) area which was again very colourful but with some bare and weedy places.

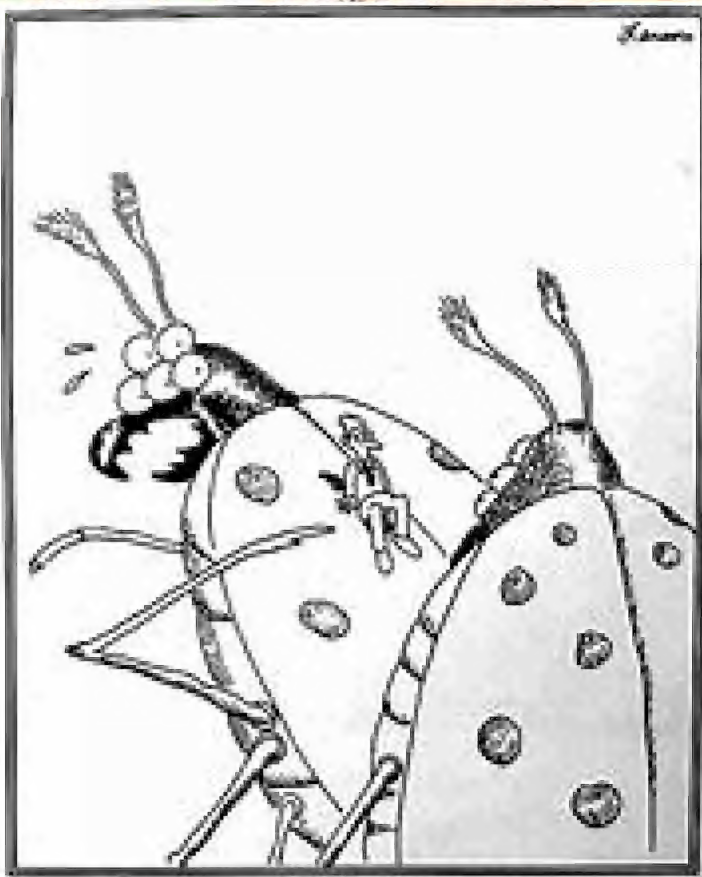
Here, Button Everlastings *Coronidium scorpioides* are budding, more Golden Bush-pea, Grey Parrot Peas *Dillwynia cinerascens*, Dwarf Bush Pea *Pultenaea humilis* and the taller Narrow-leaf Bitter Pea *Daviesia leptophyllia* (below) were also noted. Many Grey Everlastings *Ozothamnus obcordatus* were developing their yellow flower heads.



Sparrow Ground has a *Friends* group which has made big improvements with weed control over the last few years - particularly removing gorse and broom. They have working bees each Tuesday from 10 – 12md and welcome anyone who can assist. Bring spade and gloves. Sandy Banks also needs Gorse removed, if the current floral beauty is to be maintained.

Val Hocking

Penny-leaf flat pea *Platylobium rotundum* also found at Woowookarung - reported as “an excellent flowering crop of which was to be found just off Long street, at a track outlet near houses towards Wilson St.”



"Get it off me! Get it off me!"

Excursions and Meetings in 2021 - For your Diary!

Nov 5 Stella Bedggood Memorial Lecture via Zoom. 7.30 pm
Join early to share Show and Tell reports - send images to Bill.
The annual Stella Bedggood lecture will be delivered by Clarkesdale Sanctuary Coordinator and Club Secretary, Emily Noble. Her topic is Woodland Bird Habitat Restoration.

Nov 7 - Excursion to Enfield State Forest. Leader: Emily Noble.
Meet at her place at 10.00am to car pool and proceed to Enfield.

At time of publication, outdoor gatherings are limited to 30 people and there is no longer a requirement to wear a mask, although social distancing is still encouraged.

Dec 3 - Club meeting and **Dec 5** excursion to Flagstaff Hill
see details p.9.

All meetings and excursions are subject to the ever-changing COVID restrictions and planned events may have to change at short notice. We will try to notify members of any changes to our activities.

Of course, if you are not well or are suffering any flu-like symptoms, please stay at home.

Committee

President	Bill Elder
Secretary	Emily Noble
Treasurer	Kathy Elder
	Andy Arnold
	Bernadette Cheesman
	Val Hocking
	Graeme Lunt
	John Petheram

Correspondence: PO Box 328W, Ballarat West, 3350

Email: Secretary:- Emily Noble

Editor: Bill Elder

Treasurer Kathy Elder

Website: <http://fieldnatballarat.wordpress.com>

Club email: ballaratfnc@gmail.com

Meetings - due to COVID-19, meetings may have number limits applied. Members will be kept informed of any restrictions as needed.

A monthly publication of the Field Naturalists' Club of Ballarat Inc.
Incorporation # A0014919P ABN 13 150 403 135